The only Buddhist priest in the areas studied was at the small village of Maegawa, within walking distance of Hinatogawa and Hanashiro. He was a priest of the Jōdo sect (Jōdoshu), one of the important sects of Japan, and stressing salvation by faith. The sect of the priest in this village is of no importance, since the rural people now or before the war had neither the interest nor the capacity for doctrinal distinctions. The temples of this sect were burned during the war, including one in the village of Kochinda, a junction point between Naha and Gushichan.

Before the war the colors of the robes varied with the sect and with the position of the priest in the hierarchy. In the Jōdo sect, the lowest grade wore black, followed up the scale by orange, blue or green, a chocolate reddish brown, and purple, the highest. This contrasts sharply with the priest's present improvisations. His is the black robe of the Shinshu sect. It is a summer garment, made of soft light silk called shiya and resembles a man's kimono, but is longer and sweeps the floor. The garment hangs straight down and is not gathered or tucked. The only other religious possessions were a bell and a badly soiled print of the Buddha (oshaku) which hung in his room.

Before the war, some people in the Gushichan area requested the services of a priest at funerals. After the war, the people of Hanashiro, and other villages as well, decided because of the expense, to forego the services of a priest.

Occasionally this priest officiates when the bones in the temporary tombs of Hinatogawa are moved to the extended family tomb at Itoman, or in a ceremony honoring a death anniversary. Few Okinawans became priests. This priest is a native of Japan, one of the few remaining Japanese priests in the island. At eleven, he entered a Buddhist temple (tera) and has been engaged in religious activity ever since. Now about 50, he has a wife and two children; his head is unshaved and the hair is of a conventional cut. He does not depend on the priesthood for a living, but is employed as an official in a village office.

The situation with regard to Buddhism was quite similar in Matsuda, although there is no priest in the vicinity. There is little doubt, if the villages studied are typical, that this already moribund religion is disappearing altogether here, choked off by lack of temples, lack of priests, and by indifference.

It is not so with household Buddhism, if this term may be used to describe ceremonies and beliefs centering around the Buddhist god shelf or family altar (butsudan). This household altar is in the second room of every home. Around it collect the sentimental memories of the past, such as family pictures, photographs of young soldiers and dearly loved relatives. Prayers and offerings of food and drink to the dead are made before it.

An important part of the Buddhist altar is a frame holding the memorial tablets for the family dead. These tablets (ihai) are pieces